



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –January 9, 2009

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Hoekstra Statement on Obama Appointment of Dennis Blair

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, issued the following statement after President-Elect Barak Obama nominated retired Adm. Dennis Blair for Director of National Intelligence:*

“Though I have the utmost respect for America’s military, the appointment of a career military official as director of national intelligence causes me concern. I am not critical of Mr. Blair’s distinguished service, but I continue to be alarmed by the growing control of our national intelligence apparatus by the military. While the military has a role in intelligence, having our nation’s intelligence primarily filtered through a military lens risks us losing the strategic focus a civilian perspective brings to the overall intelligence picture.

“If confirmed as DNI, Mr. Blair must continue streamlining an ODNI bureaucracy that has grown beyond what was envisioned when Congress approved intelligence reform in 2004. He also will have to continue establishing clear lines of authority between the Pentagon-controlled elements of the intelligence community and the civilian, national strategic elements.”

Hoekstra earlier issued the following joint statement with U.S. Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., on the nomination of Leon Panetta to lead the CIA:

“We support President-Elect Barack Obama’s choice of Leon Panetta to serve as Director of the CIA. Mr. Panetta has a 40-year record in public service - notably as a member of Congress, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Chief of Staff under President Clinton, and recently as a member of the Iraq Study Group. A consumer of intelligence for years, he consistently has demonstrated an ability to lead in a bipartisan fashion and always see the big picture - attributes that would benefit the CIA and our nation.”

Hoekstra went on to add:

“I have called for a new direction at the CIA for some time, and it is my hope that Leon Panetta can bring about a much-needed change in the Agency’s culture. Mr. Panetta, if confirmed, will inherit an organization that frequently does great work, but absorbs little meaningful internal or external oversight of its activities. The recent IG report on CIA shoot-down in Peru highlighted this and other disturbing actions.

“I am committed to working with Mr. Panetta to help ensure the CIA has the tools and authorities it needs to spy on and disrupt America’s enemies, but I will continue to press him to instill greater accountability for the organization. I support the decision by the president-elect to nominate an individual with a civilian background to lead the nation’s premier, civilian intelligence-gathering agency. I also look forward to working with Dennis Blair and Leon Panetta as the Committee oversees their efforts to provide America with the robust and agile intelligence capabilities we need to protect our homeland. For the sake of national security, it is imperative we work together in a nonpartisan manner.”